

Exhibit 70

PREScriptions FOR AN EPIDEMIC; OHIO HAS A MOUNTING DRUG PROBLEM

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Body

Large numbers of Ohioans live reasonably healthy and productive lives because prescription drugs provide relief from pain. These drugs play an increasingly larger role in managing painful health conditions. Unfortunately, mounting evidence also points to the scourge that prescription drug abuse is becoming in communities across Ohio. This is particularly true for high-potency opium-based painkillers such as oxycodone and hydrocodone.

Attempts failed in the Ohio House during the last legislative session to clamp down on the illegal distribution of controlled drugs. A renewed effort to address the problem should fare much better. A bill introduced in the House this week would tighten regulations, among other provisions targeting overprescription by providers. Mike DeWine, the attorney general, has announced he will devote more funding and staff to pursue the problem aggressively.

In a report last fall, a task force commissioned by former Gov. Ted Strickland described prescription drug abuse in the state as an epidemic. In the past decade, Ohio deaths from accidental drug overdoses surpassed the national average, rising from 2.9 per 100,000 in 1999 to 13 per 100,000 in 2008. In 2007 and 2008, unintentional drug overdose exceeded suicides and automobile crashes as the leading cause of injury death in the state. The death rate from prescription drug abuse, the study found, is more than three times the rate for the crack-cocaine epidemic at its peak.

The drug epidemic is especially acute in southern Ohio. In Scioto County, enough prescription painkillers were dispensed last year to provide 123 doses for every resident. In several counties, the unintentional death rate is close to 15 per 100,000.

If legislators require an incentive to act, they would do well to consider that an epidemic of drug abuse carries additional costs, among them physical and mental illnesses and increased crime.

Notes

Our Opinion

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